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FROM

The Author





A STORY OF

A NEW ENGLAND TOWN

ADDRESS BY HENRY H. SPRAGUE

GIVEN AT

ATHOL

OLD HOME WEEK

JULY 26, 1903



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1904



A STORY OF

A NEW ENGLAND TOWN

A STORY OF
A NEW ENGLAND TOWN.

"There is no place like Home."

We gather at our old home to-day to lay down before her our tributes of affection and of gratitude.

Whether our eyes have lingered upon these scenes from day to day so that every object has long seemed to be indelibly printed and fixed, or our vision, after long absence, has been possibly blurred and confused by the tender memories of other years, let us all look again with the quickened sight which this day must inspire, and seek to realize the beauty of the birthright which was appointed by Nature to be ours.

It is no wonder that the native Indians lingered longest in these secluded valleys, planting these fertile meadows, fishing in the winding, eddying brooks and rivers, and hunting in the surrounding forests which abounded with game, and finally yielded up their native rights with sadness and reluctance, mingled with menace and resistance.

It was natural, too, that the first settlers of the town should seek these encircling hills upon which to build their homes, and thus to gain not only

greater security from surrounding perils, but that higher power which Nature gives to those who seek to look most widely upon her work.

The valleys and the hills are still within our sight to-day. The river,[1] changed little except in name, runs in the same course through the town, sometimes rushing with its noisy chatter, sometimes lingering in graceful stretches of repose, and sometimes arrested summarily in its course to help do its work in the busy round of civilization. Mill Brook, also called to do its share of labor for human needs, still finds its chance to tear away from all restraint, and leaps madly from rock to rock in deep defiles to join its waters with the larger stream, while Tully Brook, with greater patience and independence, lingers more longingly at the foot of its sister hills before it comes to the embrace of the main river.

Ward Hill still gazes down from its proud eminence and proclaims dominion; the "Street," from its long-extended ridge, looking on either side, claims its natal beauty, and, more boldly than ever, stripped of its thickets, High Knob asserts its far-reaching realm; Chestnut Hill lifts from point to point its noble elms, emblems of grace and age; the Tullys, big and little, though shorn of their primeval crowns, bear undaunted their regal crests; and the old West Hill, its faithful sentinel[2] ever on guard,

[1] Miller's River, formerly called Pequoig River.
[2] The "Sentinel Elm."

responds to them all, with its never-failing "All's well." The fertile slopes and meadows still smile securely and richly between them, though their products are of the white man's and not of the Indians' planting.

It was a fair possession — you will hardly find a fairer one — which the red sons of the forest yielded to our fathers more than a century and a half ago, in order that they, and their children, and their children's children, might enter and improve them for loftier purposes and for higher uses. Look at it as we may to-day, with eyes familiarized by constant gazing, or dazzled or made critical by any splendors which the world may afford, it is a noble heritage which our fathers bequeathed.

What is the record of the purposes fulfilled, of the uses made of the lands which our ancestors seized; and have their successors done their part to justify those acts of seizure?

For more than one hundred years after the beginning of the Commonwealth, this region was allowed to remain an unbroken wilderness, and it was as late as the year 1732 that the General Court took the first steps to lay out the township on Miller's River, six miles square, and gave it its Indian name of Paquoiag[1] and allotted its lands for settlement.[2] How familiar to-day the names of those admitted to

[1] The name appears in the old records in many different spellings.

[2] See Appendix, p. 41.

the goodly company of original proprietors, — Field, Oliver and Lee, Morton and Jones and Lord and Kendall, Fay and Smith, Goddard, Bancroft, Wheeler and Twichell, and others whose names still linger upon our tongues.

In September in the year 1735, five of these admitted proprietors, accompanied by their families, with their household goods upon their shoulders, journeyed through the woods from the Connecticut River and established here their abodes.[1] Here they built the first homes one hundred and sixty-eight years ago; and, separated from civilization and neighbors by many miles of pathless woods, surrounded by hostile Indians and beasts of prey, with only the most primitive means of subsistence, they sought to found a town.

The first settlers had their trials and discouragements: there were lurking dangers by day as they cleared their fields and planted their crops with their muskets by their sides; they were driven at night to their rude garrisons for common shelter and defence and to watch against attack from fire and tomahawk; they were exposed to suffering from sickness and disease, from scantiness of food and clothing, but they neither flinched nor failed before the task. They were men and women of resolute spirit and indomitable courage, of patient industry and sturdy enterprise. Whatever their failings, to which history is silent, they were a worthy stock to

[1] See Appendix, p. 43.

whom their descendants may look back with gratitude and pride.

On the sixth day of March in the year 1762, the proprietors of the plantation of "Payquage" were invested by the General Court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay with the rights and privileges of a town under the name of Athol,[1] a name given it, it seems, by its largest and most distinguished landowner, from his ancestral home among the picturesque hills and glens of the bold Scottish Highlanders.[2]

Its existence as a struggling, outlying settlement ended, and its corporate life with the rights and responsibilities of a New England town began.

The martial spirit had begun with the founding of the settlement. The first settlers had marched with guns in hand into the plantation, and in all the earlier years the musket had been as necessary for their welfare as the implements of peaceful labor. The defence of their lives and their homes had required the cultivation of warlike habits and measures.

Several of the inhabitants had already enlisted in the provincial service for the French and Indian war, and some had laid down their lives at Crown Point, and in the expeditions against Canada for the protection of the Colonies and the empire

[1] See Appendix, p. 43.

[2] Col. John Murray, see Appendix, p. 44.

against foreign attack.[1] When the Crown called for their assistance they had been ready to respond to its summons.

But now a different struggle was approaching. The rights of the people were in danger from the encroachments of the Crown itself.

The towns of New England were virtually clusters of independent powers, acknowledging the sovereign in matters of national defence and protection, and willing, if need be, to contribute voluntarily their money and their lives to the great empire, not to which they belonged, but of which they felt themselves to be a proud part. They were yet jealous to the last degree, as free-born Englishmen, of their right to local self-government. By their own unaided efforts, through hardships and sufferings, they had sought to build their homes, they had sought and struggled for individual freedom, and they had gained it here on the sea-coasts and in the forests.

The same General Court which had given the town its name had listened to the stirring words of James Otis and applauded his vindication of the rights of the colonists, and the town with its earliest breath had drawn in the inspiration of independence.

Within eight years after its birth, the first blood of the colonists in the struggle for their rights was shed, and the inhabitants responded to the reports

[1] Rev. Mr. Clarke's Centennial Discourse, p. 74.

of the Boston Massacre on the fifteenth day of May, 1770, by voting six pounds "to provide a stock of amonition for the town."

Four years later when news of the Boston Port Bill came, the men of Athol gathered, on July 7, 1774, in full town meeting, and it was "unanimously agreed to enter into a league or covenant" to renounce the use and consumption of all goods arriving in America from Great Britain until the Act should be repealed and the people restored to the free use and enjoyment of their natural or charter rights, or until, as was significantly added, other measures should be adopted by the body of the people or the General Congress of the colonies, which was soon to assemble, more likely to afford its deliverance. It was voted that the league be deposited with the town clerk to be kept with the town records. A committee to correspond with other towns of the Province was also chosen, consisting of Deacon Aaron Smith, William Bigelow, Josiah Goddard, Capt. John Haven, Ephraim Stockwell, James Oliver, Abner Graves, James Stratton, Jr., and Daniel Lamson.

In the following month, on the twenty-fifth day of August, in the year 1774, the month preceding the passage of the famous Suffolk County resolutions, which were presented to the First Continental Congress on its assembling and indorsed by that body, the men of Athol were again called together "to consider and determine on what measures are proper

for this town upon the present exigencies of our public affairs, more especially relative to the late edict of the British Parliament for the blocking up of the port or harbour of Boston"; and again they gathered in town meeting and they unanimously passed their declaration of rights.

The resolutions which they adopted were long and comprehensive. They declared it the duty of every inhabitant of the colonies and of the distressed province to unite in one firm bond of union; that, acknowledging themselves loyal and dutiful subjects of King George the Third, they stood ready to maintain and defend his crown and dignity so long as he should rule and govern agreeably to the English Constitution and their own chartered rights; but that the late bills of Parliament by which their charter rights were taken away, and the free constitution of the government thereby annihilated and destroyed, were a violation of the sacred compact between Great Britain and the Province, to be rejected with abhorrence.

They "Resolved," as the vote ran, "that we stand ready to join our feeble efforts in conjunction with the rest of our brethren in these colonies or of this Province, to prevent the above mentioned Acts from taking effect, and also to assist to the utmost in our power in the most prudent and likely measures that may be adopted, to recover our lost liberties and privileges"; and they added as a practical suggestion, that "if it be not too much boldness

and presumption for so small a town to mention any particular plan, we are humbly of opinion that it would have a happy tendency to work our deliverance, if the Province should reassume the first charter that was given them, and at the same time let the mother country know that we not only remain willing, but even desirous to continue loyal and dutiful subjects to King George consistent with the liberties and privileges granted in said charter." They finally declared that any person accepting a commission or post of office under the New Establishment should be treated as an enemy to his country, as he was lending a helping hand to those who were endeavoring to enslave them.[1]

I have spoken of these resolutions at length, but I wish that I might recite them in full. I know no bolder or stronger statement of the rights of the colonies made by any municipal body at so early a date, and none more complete and practical and far-reaching. If they did not assert independence, they breathed the spirit of the immortal declaration proclaimed nearly two years later, on the fourth day of July, 1776.[2]

Yet it had been a period of less than two score years since these men had first gathered here to conquer a wilderness, and hardly more than a dozen years since they had been incorporated as a town.

Their patriotism did not, however, in their re-

[1] See, for full text of resolutions, Appendix, p. 44.

[2] See Appendix, p. 46.

moteness, find expression simply in resolutions. In the month following their adoption the town chose William Bigelow, a delegate to the Provincial Congress at Concord and at Cambridge, and voted to enlist thirty men, exclusive of officers, "to send in case of alarm," and to have two companies of militia in town. On January 11, 1775, they appointed John Haven, James Stratton, Jr., William Bigelow, Deacon Aaron Smith, Hiram Newhall, Josiah Goddard and James Oliver, a Committee of Inspection, "to see that the Resolves of the Continental and Provincial Congresses are faithfully observed."

They organized and trained their company of minute men; and when news came of the march of the British upon Lexington and Concord, these men, twenty-seven in number, under the command of Captain Ichabod Dexter and Lieutenants Ephraim Stockwell and Abner Graves, mustered at the call, and, before the nineteenth of April was over, they had started on a seventy-mile march to Cambridge to the aid of their brethren in arms. Thirteen days' actual service credited to the company shows that they formed a part of that wonderful up-gathering around Boston of thousands of men who, when the first shot was heard, rallied at the minute's summons in defence of American liberty.

Thenceforward the men of Athol did their part in the struggle for independence. They marched under Captain Stockwell to Bennington; they were chronicled at Dorchester Heights, and at Ticonde-

roga, at Tarrytown, in the Jerseys, at White Plains and at Saratoga. The names of one hundred and fifty-six Athol men are found upon the muster and pay rolls of the Continental Army. And as the population at this time probably but little, if any, exceeded eight hundred men, women and children, all told, it seems that one out of every five or six of the total population — or substantially every able-bodied man — did military service at some period during the Revolutionary War.

They fought in support of the principles of independence which the inhabitants had at the outset in town meeting proclaimed. They likewise assessed themselves liberally in money for the charges of the war. They met heavy requisitions made upon the town for money and supplies. They equipped and maintained the soldiers of the town in the field, and they supported the families left at home. Their efforts and their sacrifices seem almost beyond their strength and their means.

The spirit of independence did not henceforward languish. As questions concerning the government arose, the inhabitants, assembled in town meeting, were quick to express their opinions in favor or in opposition. They asked that a declaration of rights be inserted in the first plan of a State Constitution submitted to the towns, and they chose a committee to suggest amendments to the scheme. In the year 1787, they expressed their satisfaction with the form

of the National Constitution when submitted to the State for adoption, though their sister towns in the County arrayed themselves unanimously in opposition.

In successive town meetings, the inhabitants vigorously protested against the measures adopted by the national government preceding and attendant upon the war of 1812. They were again opposing evils which more especially affected the towns upon the sea-coast.

On August 31, 1808, they adopted a petition to the President of the United States, in which they "beg leave, respectfully and unanimously, to represent that although the evils resulting from the embargo laws may not be so immediately and sensibly felt by individual towns as by our seaports, and although the farmer may not, at present, so much as the merchant, feel their deleterious effects, yet they are considered of sufficient magnitude to create a general alarm and distress in the interior part of the country, and that the ruin of the husbandman will soon follow that of the merchant, unless said evils can be speedily removed," and they prayed ". . . that the said laws may be suspended as soon as consistent with the nature and fitness of things."

In accordance with the report of a committee, of which James Oliver was chairman, and Joseph Pierce, James Humphreys, William Young, and Joseph Proctor were members, they resolved, on

February 15, 1809, with the ardor which existed of old, "That whereas civil liberty and the pursuit of happiness are considered by us as inalienable rights, and no less essential to the good and well-being of Political Society than public authority, We will never surrender these rights but with the surrender of our lives, and as the late measures of our national administration are in our opinion, partial, unjust, inexpedient and unconstitutional, the opinion of any earthly judge to the contrary notwithstanding; therefore Resolved that we are not bound to support, and we will not support such measures"; and the State Legislature was earnestly requested "not to quit their posts until they shall have asserted the sovereignty and independence of this State and secured to its citizens their wonted privileges." These resolutions seem to have been adopted against the protests of some of the voters.

The town thus expressed with its former boldness, at the outset of the controversy which culminated in the war of 1812, its sympathy with the sufferings experienced by its sister towns upon the coast and its opposition to the measures of the national government.

Again, on January 31, 1814, after the conflict had been raging for two years, the inhabitants in town meeting, in accordance with the report of a committee of which Joseph Proctor, James Oliver, Dr. Chaplin, and Samuel Sweetser were members, candidly submitting as to the "disgraceful war carried

on ostensibly for the defence of sailor rights and free trade," "whether soldiers have now any rights to lose or trade any freedom to expect," denounced the assumption of authority by Congress as a "daring attempt at Usurpation and Despotism," and called upon the honorable members of the General Court of the Commonwealth "to use every constitutional means to induce an honorable peace, and to repel every encroachment upon the state sovereignties, and while we would be rivalled by none in cheerful submission to all constitutional requisitions of the General Government for the interest and happiness of these United States, we stand ready at the call of our State government to resist all encroachments and usurpations to the last extremity, and as in duty bound will ever pray."

We may still better appreciate the intensity of the feeling in the town in opposition to the measures adopted by the national administration in this controversy, as well as the strong sentiment in sympathy with the suffering of its sister towns, when we recall that the Rev. Mr. Estabrook, the apostle of peace and good-will, availing himself of a Fast Day service, in his prayer invoked the choicest blessings, each by name, upon the Governor and all the other State officials, and then, after a moment's pause, continued, "O Lord, thou hast commanded us to pray also for our enemies; we therefore beseech thee to bless the President of these United States and the two houses in Congress.

assembled," and, specifying their particular transgressions, besought that they might see the error of their ways and abandon their evil courses.[1]

The resolutions of the town were a startling assertion of State rights and independence of national control, from which the town in later years fully receded, and it abundantly testified, by its acts as well as its words, its belief that the Union of the States was one and inseparable.

When the life of the Nation was threatened by its own misguided sons, and the call for assistance came from the President, the inhabitants of Athol gave response as quick and as forcible as of old, when their individual liberties were assailed. On the twentieth of April, in 1861, when the news came that their brethren, who had rallied to the defence of the capitol, had been shot down in the streets of Baltimore, — that the struggle had actually begun, and the first blood had been shed, — the people again gathered in public meeting, and with enthusiastic unanimity pledged themselves to the support of the national government. Men, far exceeding in number the due proportion applicable to the town under the President's call, straightway enlisted in the service.

To every succeeding call, a like answer was given. It would seem that the enlistments of men in every

[1] George W. Horr, in History of Worcester County (1879), Vol. 1, p. 225.

case exceeded the number required as the quota of the town, and when the war was over a surplus of twenty-eight men were to her credit. Athol furnished during the four years of the war three hundred and eighty-seven men and fifteen commissioned officers, a creditable record made by a population of twenty-six hundred. Men of Athol bore their part in all the great campaigns in the East; they marched through the Shenandoah, and fought at Cedar Mountain and Antietam, at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, they battled with Burnside at Newburn and Roanoke Island; they accompanied Grant in the desperate contests through the Wilderness; they struggled through the swamps of Louisiana, and shared in the victories of Port Hudson and Vicksburg; they marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the sea. Some laid down their lives in the battlefield and on ships of war, and there were others who were fated to languish and die in Southern prisons, and there were happily those whose privilege it was at the end to march with their comrades back to the Nation's capitol and to lay down their arms in peace before the President of a reunited country.

The individual records made, notably by the companies recruited chiefly from the town and sent forth under the commands of Captains Caswell and Fay, were conspicuous for sobriety, good order, and efficiency. Sixty-nine of the ninety-four men constituting Captain Fay's company, "being desir-

ous," as they recited upon starting from the State camp for active service in the field, "of returning to our homes at the expiration of nine months with characters as pure and unsullied as when we bid our friends adieu, now, therefore, do hereby pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, during said period of nine months; and, moreover, by our influence, both in word and deed, we pledge ourselves to discountenance everything which tends to profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity, and at all times to conduct ourselves as pure, high-minded men."[1] Certainly such men, in imitation of their Puritan ancestors, marched to war as Christian soldiers, to return when their service was over to do their duties as good citizens.

But the tale is not all told in recounting the story of the men who marched to the field and served on the seas. The citizens sought to care for the families of those who had departed, the town voted large sums of money, and during the entire period the hands of the men and women and children were alike busy in public and private measures for the relief and comfort of the soldiers in camp, and for alleviating, as far as possible, the sufferings and miseries of war.

Such has been the part taken by the inhabitants of the town in the more striking periods of its history. In reclaiming the land from the wilderness

[1] Athol in Suppressing the Great Rebellion.

and devoting it to the purpose of civilization, in asserting and maintaining the rights and liberties of the people when the mother country sought arbitrarily to snatch them away, in defending the Nation and saving the Union which they had helped to build up, when foes from within sought to dissolve the Union and to destroy the Nation, this town bore well its part — and need not blush before any of its peers.

The story upon which we have dwelt is largely of martial deeds and warlike measures, but peace has had her victories as well as war. It is the triumphs of peace which we see about us to-day, and the fruits of one hundred and sixty-eight years of peaceful, patient strivings which are spread before us.

In the original allotment of lands for the planting of Paquoiag, out of the sixty-three house-lots to be laid out, there were first assigned "one for the first settled minister, one for the ministry, one for the school."

On the twenty-ninth day of August, in the year 1750, the First Church was formally established, and the members entered into a solemn covenant by which they declared their serious and hearty belief in the Christian religion, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, comprising the revealed will of God respecting both what they were to believe and what they were to do, and obligated themselves to the duties of a good, sober, and religious life, and to

walk in love with one another and in the fear of God. On the seventh of the following November, the Rev. James Humphreys, a graduate of Harvard College, having been invited by vote of the Proprietors of the Plantation, arrived from Dorchester on horseback, with sermons, wardrobe, and other earthly goods in saddle-bags, to be ordained as the first settled minister of the Plantation. Mr. Humphreys began his ministry to a community of hardly more than twenty families. The first log meeting house in the woods was soon burnt down, but the people immediately commenced to build a new one on the Street near the fort; but "however prosperous in their building," says the early chronicler,[1] "troubles yet await them, for when a part was in the sanctuary, a number was obliged to watch at the post of her doors to keep off their devouring enemy, whilst others were worshipping God within — for three successive years the Rev. Mr. Humphreys carried his gun into the meeting house in case of an alarm." His kindly ministry lasted a little more than thirty-one years, the people, says again the ancient chronicle, "being in perfect friendship one with another and their minister."

Mr. Humphreys was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Estabrook, who, for forty-three years, was the devoted shepherd of a flock which embraced almost the whole community.

Thus for eighty years there was substantially one

[1] Manuscript of James Humphreys, [illegible]. See also Appendix, p. 47.

church and one parish, and the parish was one with the town. The town built and maintained the meeting house; it called and settled the minister, and fixed and paid his salary, and its vote was necessary for his dismissal. Until the year 1830, with few exceptions, the people all listened to a single preacher, and one covenant of belief sufficed for the members of the church.[1] The people had lingered long in religious harmony after controversies in faith and dogma had begun to agitate the towns and congregations of New England. At that date came the agreement to disagree, and a portion of the people went forth from the old church to a separate gathering-place. The inhabitants, in accordance with the dictates of differing consciences, began to worship the same God of their fathers in sanctuaries built according to their several faiths.[2]

And now, instead of one, several edifices, constructed with the simplicity and beauty which characterize the better church architecture of New England, lift their spires heavenward. The asperities which marked the first differences of belief have largely disappeared, and the various worshippers, sharing more and more in the harmony of the outward form which prevails in their church building, seek again, with the obligations of the ancient covenant, "to inculcate the duties of a good, sober and religious life, and to walk in love with one another in the fear of God."

[1] See Appendix, p. 46.

[2] Regarding the First Church fifty years ago, see p. 37.

The school began apace with the church. In the year following the incorporation of the town, in 1763, thirteen pounds, six shillings, eight pence were appropriated to provide a school, and three years later it was voted to build two schoolhouses. Four years later four more schools were provided for.

In the year 1783, the town voted to procure a grammar school master, and, in order that discipline might go hand in hand with education, the committee appointed for the purpose was likewise instructed "to procure Stocks for the Town as the Law Directs."

The beginnings thus made have been sustained with constantly increasing interest and liberality. The primitive log cabins, dependent upon a rude door and a single window for light, equipped with hardly more than logs split in halves for benches upon which the children might sit, were succeeded first by framed one-roomed and two-roomed buildings, with few furnishings and appliances beyond the board seats and upright backs and the long wooden desks, which, often engraved with deeply whittled letters, served to transmit a memory of their successive occupants; and now these, in turn, have given place to structures built in enduring brick, which, for utility and construction, completeness of furnishing, and beauty of design and location, may safely compete with any in the Commonwealth.

The first appropriations for the support of the

schools have been doubled and trebled, and multiplied again and again all through the dark and exhaustive periods of war, and financial and industrial depression. The town has testified its constant devotion to the public schools. Under the article in the warrant for the last annual town meeting, instead of the thirteen pounds, six shillings, eight pence, in old currency, there was appropriated the amount of $22,500, furnishing a sum of almost $21 to be expended for each enrolled pupil.

But it is not alone the church and the school which have nurtured the inhabitants in knowledge and enlightened liberty of thought and action. The old school districts, first established as "squadarns"[1] to perform their part in the educational service of the town, collected their district libraries, made up of a score, or two score or more, it might be, of volumes of science, of natural and political history, of practical household knowledge, and often handed around for keeping from family to family. Not infrequently in winter evenings the community gathered in the little schoolhouse, bringing their candles in hand, to the spelling match or the singing school, or oftener to the district lyceum. Here the boys arose, and in prepared declamation repeated the wise and eloquent words of the sages and orators of the past, the girls read their well-penned compositions, and the elders engaged on

[1] See Appendix, p. 46.

chosen sides in long and earnest debates, now upon some selected question of general morals, and now upon some problem which agitated the State or the Nation, each side, affirmative and negative, strong with might and main to win the prize of the contest, — the final vote of the small audience for superiority in argument. The outer district at times called from the centre, or the village, the minister or the doctor or the lawyer to add weight to the debate, or to deliver a more formal lecture.

The Sunday-school library furnished a weekly volume for home reading to each of its pupils, made up of books — as some of us here to-day can testify — well chosen for telling and teaching the living stories and loftier sentiments of the earlier authors, who were imbued with the duty of both elevating and instructing their readers.

These more modest agencies were supplemented, beginning more than fifty years ago, by Library Associations which were organized to make larger collections and wider distributions of books. The earlier of these were officered entirely by the women of the town.

The year 1882 marked the merging of the private association in a town institution, and the establishment of the Public Library, the town voting to furnish a suitable place, appropriate money for maintenance, and to provide for the purchase of books, which now number more than six thousand volumes.

When the Lyceum lecture came in vogue, the town organized its more formal lecture associations, and, from no inconsiderable funds subscribed for the purpose, invited men eminent within and without the Commonwealth to address the people upon subjects within their various departments of knowledge, and upon the living questions of the day.

Some here may recall the appearance upon the platform, in ready response to the invitation of the "Pequoig Institute," of one about to become a reverend President of Harvard College, who, with blackboard and with chalk in hand, proceeded at more than an hour's length, by learned terms and drawn illustrations, to develop the functions of the parabola and its cognate curves; but there were others, like Phillips and Whipple, and Holland and Starr King, and Emerson, who upon more vivid topics stirred youth and elders alike to a quicker intellectual life, by their words of wisdom and of eloquence.

There has been added in later years the influence of the press. On the twenty-eighth day of December, 1827, "Freedom's Sentinel" proclaimed aloud its purpose "to foster and disseminate in the minds of the rising generations those attachments to education, habits of industry and principles of virtue, upon which depend the transcendent blessings of our excellent political institutions," "to encourage agricultural pursuits," "to reprobate in the strongest terms the injustice and horrors of slavery"

with a view, by every discreet exertion, to secure "its complete abolition," to advance religion and morality as essential to good government and the happiness of mankind, and withal to sustain fearlessly the national administration of John Quincy Adams, whose message to Congress it published in full, to the exclusion of "a great variety of news and miscellaneous matter." I should, however, add that Theodore Jones, James Humphreys, and Eliphalet Thorpe, Morton and Hill, and Nickerson and Cheney found space to advertise their various wares and products.

On the twenty-ninth day of December, in 1829, with undisguised repugnance, it published, in part, the first message of Martin Van Buren, and announced the determination of its publisher "to take a friendly leave of his patrons, and depart in peace, good spirits and with empty pockets."

After an interval of many years, in 1850, the "Sentinel" was succeeded by "The White Flag," an ensign "to promote the Christian Confidence of Neighborhoods, Towns, States and Nations." Unfortunately this publication also proved premature, and it had a shorter term of life than its predecessor.

The time had not seemed ripe for the permanent newspaper until the year 1866, when the publication of the "Worcester West Chronicle" began, and it was followed five years later by the "Athol Transcript," and, in still later years, by "The Healthy Home" and "Our Church Record."

These succeeding publications have all maintained the high standard raised by the early pioneer in journalism, and have been conducted with constant devotion to the interests of the community.

The levelling of the forests and the cultivation of the lands for food were necessarily the first occupations of the inhabitants, but it was not long before the river and its branches on either side, dashing from fall to fall in their swifter courses, allured them by promises of assistance to other industrial activities. The saw mill and the grist mill were naturally first erected, the town voting an "encouragement" in land or money for their building; then came the fulling mill for the finishing of the fabrics which the hands of the women had spun and woven, and at an early date the scythe-shop. In the year 1793 it is chronicled of the industries of the town that there were "four grist mills, six saw mills, one fulling mill, and one trip hammer," and the writer added that he must not omit to mention that there was a very fine spring issuing out upon the side of Miller's River, the water whereof had the efficacy and virtue without soap which others had with it, and were moreover so medicinal that some by washing the parts affected had been cured of poison, and others had found great relief when afflicted with rheumatic complaints.[1]

[1] Whitney's History of Worcester County, p. 247.

Though the medicinal spring, it seems, has long ceased to flow, the mills, and the shops, and the factories have grown with steady increase in numbers, and water and steam have united to assist the labor of hands and brains.

Were it possible to enumerate here the products which the industrial establishments of to-day in the town are contributing to the markets and the needs of the country and of the world, the list would seem in variety a marvel for a community little exceeding seven thousand in number. The census of the year 1900 tells us in bare statistics that, in place of the saw and grist mills, the fulling mill, and the trip-hammer, enumerated a little more than a century before, there were one hundred and seventy-nine manufacturing establishments, having a capital of $1,722,593, employing fourteen hundred and fifty-five wage-earners, who received an annual sum of $668,445, and the products of whose labors amounted to $2,549,704.[1]

Though these statistics may suggest, they fail to tell the happier features of the industrial record of the town. It is most fortunate that its entire business is not concentrated in the few, but is shared by the many, and that its industries call, not for classes drilled and confined to routine labor, but for individual men and women of skill and intelligence. That community has advanced nearest the ideal New England town in which distinctions of

[1] See Appendix, p. 47.

power and wealth have failed to gain a foothold, where every man in his chosen field mingles and labors side by side with his fellow, where mansion and tenement stand not in frowning contrast, but houses and homes look each other brightly and cheerfully face to face; and, judged by such standards, this town has attained an enviable place among the towns of the Commonwealth.

Best of all the products of the town have been the men and the women who have from the founding of the plantation made up the list of its townspeople. The resolution and enterprise and the intelligent public spirit which inspired the first proprietors, have continued to animate their successors in all the following periods of its history, and it is remarkable how large a part the descendants of these proprietors, in name as well as in spirit, have borne in the events of the succeeding generations. The town and the church records, manuscripts and tradition, and the publications made from time to time, all bear witness to the individual devotion of its inhabitants to good principles of living and action. They sought to establish good homes and ennoble their domestic life and to advance by the means within their reach the general welfare of the community, and they were ever alert in thought and act to the broader interests of the State and the Nation. Difficult problems for the parish, the section, or the town sometimes came, upon which

differences arose and sides were taken, and, as must occur when men of strong will and independent judgment differ, controversies were fought vigorously and at length; but, the questions settled, the wounds have healed, the prejudices have disappeared, and mutual respect has brought better understanding and a more enlightened harmony.

The town owes largely, also, its present standing and prosperity to the character of the men whom it has selected for the direction of its affairs. The records of the town bear witness to the care and watchfulness with which its concerns, whether of trifling or of larger moment, have been guarded, and to the honesty and fidelity with which official trusts have been administered.

The town has constituted a democracy whose members have well performed their several parts.

I wish that I had the time and the power and the retrospective sight by which I might recall to your minds, in more distinct and vivid colors, the men and women whose labors and sacrifices have made Athol the cherished home which gathers us here to-day.

Embodied by history or tradition, or by tender recollections of the past, they will reappear and walk with us in the places which knew them well, and mingle in the scenes where they took their worthy parts in other days.

That revered minister who, for twoscore years

and three, led the people in love and harmony, who with mingled wisdom and humor dispensed justice and mercy to his parishioners, who, in his Catholicity, declaring himself only a "Bibletarian," held his people from the religious agitations which rent surrounding communities, will come back to his congregation, which was the whole town, bringing his message of peace and good-will.

You will see again the forms of holy men who followed Mr. Estabrook in devoted Christian service, more familiar in aspect to your gaze. In the group will stand those two valiant soldiers of the cross, who, while fighting with different weapons for the same great cause, gave their time, their zeal, and their talents to the promotion of every public interest and the uprooting of every moral evil which rose in their paths. Such ministers as Mr. Clarke and Mr. Norton would long live in the thoughts of this people had they not made their memory enduring as earlier historians of the town.

The country doctors will pursue their accustomed rounds, bringing relief and confidence to households in distress. First, in the dimness of the dawn, with features hardly to be traced, except by reflection from faces of descendants following in worthy and unbroken line, is Dr. Joseph Lord, physician, preacher, magistrate, town treasurer and clerk, surveyor and pioneer settler, combining all titles in one, and earliest in all. Next, Dr. Williams

drives in gig with speedy pace, dispensing from out his store of drugs, with firm and liberal hand, pills and pellets strong, but coated with jest and pleasantry. To milder treatment of baths and draughts, Dr. Hoyt invites his patients to the Water Cure, yet, himself ardent and bold, he espouses, with an interest beyond the care of patients, the cause of freedom and the slave. Dr. Colony, most youthful of the three, rides next with spacious carriage, full of chattering children, his neighbors' and his own, his assistants in visits welcomed alike by patients and attendants for their kindliness and cheer.

Quick to join us on a day like this, Colonel Townsend, with head erect and stalwart stride, reviews the scene made martial by his presence; again, for the annual muster on the common, heads his battalions in proud parade; or, to instill the military spirit in youthful breasts, drills in the ancient tactics, with march and countermarch, up hill and down, his company of boys. As when nearly half a century ago he marshalled the procession to dedicate anew the ancient burial ground, how gladly would he lead again the children of the old High School, uniformed, by his command, the boys in spencers dark, the girls in white dresses with black aprons, or, if they all preferred, in dresses black with aprons white.

The "freeholders and other inhabitants" will again in town meeting assemble, in his Majesty's name, to consider some fresh encroachment upon

the people's rights, and Captain Oliver will take his accustomed place as moderator in the old meeting house, strong in his convictions and bold and fearless, like his successors in each following period, to battle alike in field and forum, against wrong and oppression.

The scene changes, and now the Town Hall summons the voters to the determination of questions of local moment. Calvin Kelton takes his place as moderator. Each article of the warrant is challenged for debate, and, in quick succession, rushing to the fray, rise Captain Bassett and Lyman Hapgood and John Hill, each equipped with facts and figures on his side, each bold and strong in statement and skilful in reply, tenacious to the end, and only vanquished, if it be, after the yeas and nays are heard and reconsideration is denied.

The town magistrates return, justices whose duties were made light for lack of quarrels and of criminals, — or was it that from kindly interest, allied with judgment and sagacious tact, they kept the peace without appeal to Court. Squire Thorpe, himself in industry a pioneer, walking with ponderous step, surveys with wonder and perhaps with caustic speech the busy industries which followed the beginnings which his enterprise had helped to make. Squire Jones, the merchant with the magistrate combined, with modest courtesy and courtly mien, from his well-filled stock made up of honesty, rare judgment, and philanthropic zeal, freely dis-

tributes to town and church and people his gifts of public service and of private charity.

And Laban Morse, at home a counsellor and friend to all distressed, again, as din of war is heard, speeds, a good Samaritan, to the battle-fields, and bears to wounded soldiers their neighbors' stock of oil and wine, with messages of cheer and comfort.

In foremost rank to greet us, from Chestnut Hill will come that citizen beloved by all his neighbors, and John Kendall's neighbors, whom he loved better than himself, comprised the town. All unconscious to himself, he stands a type of gentle manliness and tender faith, of truth and honor, — the good townsman whose presence is a constant benediction.

Early in our thoughts as in our lives, comes back the teacher of our youth, in varying forms, whose face, which has a tender look, is ever radiant with learning's glow, and, though she sometimes sternly frowns, enforcing discipline with smarting hand, oftener she directs, with gentle justice, her kindly sway, winning the reward of gratitude and praise.

Again, those noble women, in whom duty seemed an impulse not command, with features veiled go forth from home and family to households worn with care and suffering, to watch from dark to dawn o'er beds of sickness and disease, all unconscious that they are following in the footsteps which angel feet have trodden.

But most vivid and dear of all in their tender greetings will come the familiar faces of the mothers and the sisters who filled home with the best of its charms and its memories. They sought not titles nor honors, they held not office in town or State, but they held the highest places in our hearts and in our lives, and in our fondest recollections we turn back to them to-day with reverent love and gratitude.

The figures of the past throng upon us, too many for me or for a single voice to mention, yet few will be forgotten in the memories which will be awakened by this occasion.

I must forbear, yet there is one figure more which I would evoke from the past. It is a familiar form, erect, alert, and always dignified, familiar to our homes and offices and streets for more than half the span of the town's history, — the lawyer-squire, a lawyer who ever makes his clients friends and debtors to his learning and his wisdom, a magistrate who sweetens justice with well-judged mercy, a citizen foremost to answer every call to public or to private service; to-day we hold both in grateful memory and in living presence, the honest, upright judge.[1]

I have tried to tell briefly the story of a New England town, the story, with some of its salient

[1] Judge Charles Field, the presiding officer and President of the Old Home Week.

features and characteristics, of our home town. It is a story of private enterprise and of public spirit, of worthy deeds and large accomplishment. Our fathers wrought, and here is the record of their labors. It is an honorable record which they deliver up to their sons and their daughters.

The past is secure, the present is to-day, the future alone is ours to shape. Its problems, though of a different nature, are as difficult and as momentous as in the past, and for their solution they require men and women as strong-hearted, as vigilant, as public-spirited, as those of the early days. Shall the sons and daughters of this town be true to the principles and examples of their fathers?

Shall they protect the home from personal vices which follow greater ease and comfort, enforce the reverence and respect which youth should yield to age and station, promote affection undisguised which blesses both the giver and the taker, inspire the consciousness that homely purity and truth are precious far beyond the worth of gold and gain, that personal honor and faith in good lead on to true success, that "man's a man" for what he is, not what he hath?

Shall they not in business life demand, if combinations of capital and interests must still hold sway, that these shall neither seek nor dare to crush out private enterprise and thrift, that employer and employed alike shall practise and enforce the golden rule in mutual respect, that corporate bodies shall

have yet a soul, and they who have direction of affairs shall feel that duty and responsibility become more personal and binding as size and power increase?

Shall they not hold fast and strong a public spirit in the town? Shall not their voice, when public interests are threatened or at stake, directed as of old by judgment and debate, proclaim aloud their protest or approval? Shall they not demand that character and merit be the call to public service, and public office still remain a public trust, that justice no distinction know between the rich and poor, and race and race, that law and order rule and never yield to passion and to frenzy, that education and religion shall have advancement and dominion, that faith and charity abound, and that the early covenant shall still bind the people of the town "to walk in love with one another and in the fear of God"?

So stands the record of the town to-day. When, in coming years, the added pages shall be scanned and read, may they impart the gratitude and pride the story of to-day affords.

If ten righteous men can save a city, a town like ours, of men and women all imbued with private virtue and with public zeal, may elevate — and even save, if need should come — a State or Nation.

THE FIRST CHURCH.

THE following extracts relative to the First Church as it existed fifty years ago, are from a letter written on the occasion of the celebration of its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, on September 11, 1900: —

"The most cherished recollections of youth and the best associations of life cluster around the old New England First Church. It stood as the centre of right thinking and good works in the community. It offered a pure and simple and sincere worship. Its pulpit not only discoursed of holier things, but the minister was the public teacher who gave the people much that was best in ancient and modern books and thought. Moral questions took on a zealous and often an eloquent interest, and the philanthropies and charities were urged from the desk, and found a ready and practical response from the pews. The Sunday-school library was town and private library for young and old alike. The noontime gatherings and lunches between services, supplemented by the weekly sewing circles, promoted good-will and friendliness, and filled a social need for the more distant dwellers, while from the homely horse-sheds there often emanated a public opinion and influence which were both beneficent and effective in neighborhood and town affairs, — and all helped to impress upon the community a spirit of true democracy. The First Church was as

potent in building up the New England town, as the New England town has contributed what is best in good government to the State and the Nation.

"Ours was a typical First Church a half-century ago. Its members had received by inheritance and tradition the sturdy God-fearing qualities which actuated its founders an hundred years before. The man-loving, peace-giving spirit of its first pastor still breathed upon them. No longer dependent upon tithes and taxes for its maintenance, the church was supported by the zeal and sacrifices of its members. The mothers who sat in their familiar, accustomed places in the old pews were women holy and devoted, the fathers were men good and true. We can recognize them as they entered on either side in full face of the gathering congregation, — a kind of ordeal before which each laid bare his strength and his weaknesses. There were the Joneses, the Morses, and the Richardsons, the Hapgoods, the Olivers, and the Grays on the one side, and on the other aisle, if I mistake not, the Kendalls, the Lords, the Fays, the Fields, and the Mortons — and the others whose familiar names you will call to mind, names several of which were transmitted by the founders. There was the choir, with Mr. Wiggins its leader, to which we respectfully arose and turned and paid our regards, and the wonderful organ which had lately come to supplant the violin and the great bass viol. Young and

active, in the pulpit was the minister, Mr. Clarke, who added to scholarly diction and literary knowledge, a zeal and fearlessness worthy the Puritan settler; and who had as a helpmate a saintly wife, whose purity and sweetness will never be effaced from the remembrance of the children to whom she was ever tenderly devoted. The indebtedness of the town, for they included the whole town in their larger parish, to Mr. and Mrs. Clarke for their faithful and disinterested labors can hardly be forgotten and unfelt as long as the old church stands."

APPENDIX.

Note 1. Page 3. The Records of the General Court, Vol. 15, page 379, contain the following Act relating to the allotment of lands in Paquoiag: —

"In Council, Friday, April 20, 1733.

"The following vote passed both Houses in July last, viz: —

"In answer to that part of His Excellency's Speech which relates to the ungranted Lands of the Province. — Upon Consideration y^e^ Power Is given the General Assembly to grant Lands especially for the Planting or Settling of the province & that by the Great Increase of His Majesty's good Subjects, many that are inclined to Industry have not been able to obtain Lands for the Employm^t^ of themselves, & Families, & great numbers have removed to Neighbouring Colonies for their accommodation. — Voted that there be four Towns opened of the Contents of Six Miles square Each viz. One at Paquoiag on Miller's River, Two on Ashueoelot River above Northfield, the other in the Eastern Country at the Head of Berwick, all to be surveyed in October or November next at furthest by the Direction of Comm^tees^ to be appointed by the General Court & their several Surveys to be Reported at the Fall Session & the Charge of the Comm^tee^ & Survey to be paid out of the public Treasury y^t^ Comm^tees^ be appointed to admit Settlers & to lay out the House Lots so that y^e^ Settlem^ts^ may be made in a Defensible manner, & to direct in the drawing thereof, but not to lay out any other Divisions without further Directions from this Court. Each Home Lot to consist of so many Acres as the Court shall Order. After Report is made of the Quality & other Circumstances of the Land, the Comm^tees^ to be paid as the Court shall Order, that there be sixty three House Lots laid out in Each Township, One for the first Settled Minister, One for the Ministry, one for the School & one for Each of the Sixty Settlers who shall settle thereon in his own person or by one of his Children. The rest of the Land to be allotted or Divided equally into Sixty three Parts; That one Year be allowed from the Survey for the Admission of Settlers, And that the Comm^tee^ be directed to Demand & receive from Each Settler at his admission Five pounds part of

which shall be employed for reimbursing the Province the Money to be advanced for paying the Committee & the Charge of the Survey, the remaining part to be employed for building Houses for publick Worship or otherwise as the General Court shall Order. That Each Settler actually live on his Land within three years from his Admission, build an House on his Land of eighteen feet square & Seven feet stud at the least, & within the same Time do sufficiently fence in & till or fit for mowing Eight Acres of Land, Each Settler to have his Land on Condition that he perform the foregoing injunctions & in Case any Settler fail of performance in the whole or in part, his Right to be forfeited & such Land shall revert to the province & the Comm^{tee} to be appointed to Admit Settlers are directed at the Time of Admission to take a Bond of Twenty pounds of each Settler to be paid to them or their Successors for the Use and Benefit of the Settlers in Case he fail of performing the several Conditions & Injunctions before mentioned & that the Settlers in each Town to be obliged to build a suitable meeting house & to settle a learned orthodox Minister in such Town within the space of five years from the Admission of the Settlers.

"Consented to J. BELCHER."

The following entry was made in the Proprietors Book of Records: —

"The following is a List of the Names of the Men admitted by the Hon^{ble} William Dudley, Chair Man of the Com^{ee}, & others, the Great & General Courts Committee, to draw House Lotts in the Township of Pequoiag on Millars River, on the 26 of June 1734 at Concord, as Setlers of said Pequoiag: —

Names of Men	Side of the River	Side of the High Way	Number of the Lotts
Edward Goddard	East,	East—	13.
Daniel Epps. Jun^{r}	East	West—	11.
Daniel Epps Son.	East	East—	9.
Ebenezer Goddard	East	West—	4.
Zechariah Field	East	West—	18.
Nehemiah Wright	West	West	7.
Richard Wheeler —	West	West	12.
Richard Morton	East	West—	9.
Samuel Morton —	West	West	1.
Ephraim Smith	West	West	3.
Nathan Waite —	East	West	15.
Charles Duharthy.	West	West	13.
Gad Waite — — —	West	East	3.
Joseph Lord — — —	East	East	3.
Benoni Twichel	East	West	10.
John Wallis — —	East	East	7.
John Wood — —	East	East	1.
Benjamin Townsend	West	East	10.
Jonathan Morton —	West	West	2.
Joseph Smith — —	East	East	6.
William Oliver — —	East	East	10.
Moses Dickinson.	West	East	9.
Joshua Dickinson.	West	East	13.
James Kellogg — —	West	East	7.
Richard Crouch	East	West	12.
Ezekiel Wallingford	West	West	10.
James Jones — — —	West	East	4.
John Grout — — —	West,	East	12.
Daniel Adams — —	West	West	5.
John Cutting — —	East	West	17.
Samuel Kendall	West,	East	6.
—— —— Ditto	East,	East	2.

Names of Men	Side of the River	Side of the High Way	Number of the Lotts	Names of Men	Side of the River	Side of the High Way	Number of the Lotts
Samuel Willard	East	West	7.	Jonathan Page — —	East	West	14.
John Smeed — — —	West	East	5.	John Longley — —	East	East	4.
William Chandler	East	West	6.	Joseph Brown — —	East	West	5.
Jonathan Marble	West	West	11.	John Child — —	East	East	11.
William Higgens — —	East	East	8.	Nathaniel Graves	East	East	12.
James Kenney	West	West	9.	George Danforth —	West	East..	14.
Abner Lee — —	East	West	1.	James Fay — —	West	West	8.
Abraham Nutt	West	East	2.	Capt. Joseph Bowman —	West	West	4.
John Headly — — .	East	West	2.	Francis Bowman —	East	West	13.
Isaac Fisk — — —	East	East	5.	Stephen Fay — — —	West	East	16.
Daniel Fisk — — —	West	East	1.	Israel Hamond — —	West	East	15.
Thomas Hapgood	East	West	16.	Benjamin Bancroft.	West	West	14.
Richard Ward — — —	West	West	6.	Joseph Harrington	East	West	3.
Samuel Tenney	West	East	8.	James Holden — —	West	East	11.

N. B. I transcribd the above from a List under the Hand of Joseph Lord who made oath to the Truth of it, & adds the following

N. B. Viz. "This above mentioned List is what the Clerk of "Pequoiag has always made use of for Want of an attested Copy; "and also entred in their Book of Records without Attest—

The above entred p^r^ A. Hill, Prop^ts^ Clerk Aug^st^ 24, 1761 ~~

Note 1. Page 4. The five proprietors who became the first settlers in the plantation of Paquoiag, were, according to Rev. Mr. Clarke in his Centennial Discourse delivered before the First Church and Society in 1850, Richard Morton, Ephraim Smith, Samuel Morton, John Smeed and Joseph Lord. Mr. Clarke, quoting the MS. of James Humphreys, says they came from Hatfield.

Note 1. Page 5. The following is the Act of the General Court incorporating the town of Athol:—

AN ACT FOR ERECTING THE NEW PLANTATION CALLED PAYQUAGE, IN THE COUNTY OF WORCESTER, INTO A TOWN BY THE NAME OF ATHOL.

WHEREAS it hath been represented to this Court that the inhabitants of the plantation of Payquage, in the county of Worcester, labour under great difficulties, by reason of their not being incorporated into a town, and are desirous of being so incorporated,—

Be it therefore enacted by the Governor, Council and House of Representatives,

SECT. 1. That the said plantation be and hereby is erected into a town by the name of Athol, bounded as follows: viz., northerly, on the plantations of Royalshire and Mountgrace; westerly, on Ervingshire and New Salem; southerly, on Petersham and the plantation called Number Six; and easterly, on said Number Six; and that the in-

habitants thereof be and hereby are invested with all the powers, privileges and immunities that the inhabitants of the towns within this province are, by law, vested with.

And be it further enacted,

SECT. 2. That John Murray, Esquire, be and hereby is directed and empowered to issue his warrant, directed to some of the principal inhabitants within said town, requiring them to warn the inhabitants of said town, qualified to vote in town affairs, to assemble at some suitable time and place in said town, to chuse such officers as are necessary to manage the affairs of said town.

Provided, nevertheless, —

SECT. 3. The inhabitants of said town shall pay their proportionable part of such county and province charges as are already assessed in like manner as thŏ this act had not been made. (Passed March 6, 1762.)

Province Laws, 1761–2. Chap. 46.

Note 2. Page 5. Col. John Murray of Rutland, Mass., who gave the town of Athol its name, was the youngest son of the Duke of Athol in Scotland. Mr. Caswell, in his "Athol, Past and Present," says that Colonel Murray in 1776 accompanied the royal army to Halifax, and that later his lands were confiscated.

Note 1. Page 9. The following are in full the resolutions passed by the town on August 25, 1774: —

On the 25th of August, 1774, "at a meeting of the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town duly assembled and convened, the following resolves were unanimously passed, viz.: —

"1st. *Resolved*, That it is the incumbent duty of every inhabitant of these British colonies, and more especially of this distressed province, to unite together in one firm bond of union, and to exert themselves to the uttermost of their power in all lawful and prudent measures to maintain, defend, and secure to ourselves and posterity all those rights and privileges which we are justly entitled to as men and Christians, and as subjects of a free government.

"2dly. *Resolved*, That we acknowledge ourselves loyal and dutiful subjects to King George the Third, whose Crown and Dignity we ever stand ready to maintain and defend so long as he shall rule and govern agreeable to the English constitution and our chartered rights. But, that the authority of late claimed by the British Parliament, to make laws binding on the colonies in all cases whatever, is unconstitutional and subversive of our natural and chartered rights, oppressive to America, and in no way beneficial to the mother country.

"3dly. *Resolved*, That the late Act of the British Parliament, for blocking up the port or harbor of Boston, by which the town is surrounded by fleets and armies, exposed to the abuses and insults of a lawless soldiery, and by which the means of their subsistence is almost entirely wrenched out of their hands, is very unjust and cruel, contrary to all equity and reason, and injurious and oppressive to this Province.

"4thly. *Resolved*, That the two late Bills of the British Parliament, by which our charter rights are entirely taken away, and the free constitution of this government utterly annihilated and destroyed, and by which, (if submitted to,) we shall soon be reduced to the most abject slavery and bondage, are a violation of the sacred compact between Great Britain and this Province; and such a breach of the natural rights and privileges of mankind, and so repugnant to the mutual obligations we are all by the law of nature under towards one another, that no person (unless they are lost to all the tender feelings of humanity) but must reject with abhorrence the thought of thus tyrannizing over their fellow creatures.

"5thly. *Resolved*, That we stand ready to join our feeble efforts in conjunction with the rest of our brethren in these colonies, or of this Province, to prevent the above-mentioned acts from taking place, and also to assist, to the utmost of our power, in the most prudent and likely measures that may be adopted, to recover and secure our lost liberties and privileges; and if it be not too much boldness and presumption for so small a town to mention any particular plan, we are humbly of the opinion that it would have a happy tendency to work our deliverance, if the Province should reassume the first charter that was given them, and, at the same time, let the mother country know that we not only remain willing, but even desirous, to continue loyal and dutiful subjects to King George, consistent with the liberties and privileges granted in said charter.

"6thly. *Resolved*, That, as committees from the several towns in this county have lately had a meeting at Worcester, which stands adjourned to the last Tuesday in this month, for the purpose of consulting together and agreeing on some measure for this county to take to prevent our courts from being held on, or modelled according to the new Establishment, we hereby signify our approbation of the same, and that we stand ready to join in such measures as shall be thought most likely to effect the above purpose; and as the committee of correspondence for this town have sent one of their members to attend the above mentioned meeting, we fully concur with, and approve of, their conduct in so doing, and that William Bigelow and Daniel Lamson be and are hereby appointed to attend the adjournment of said meeting.

"7thly. *Resolved*, That if any person shall accept any commission or post of office to serve under the new Establishment, he ought to be looked upon and treated as an enemy to his country; as he, thereby, is joining with, and lending a helping hand to those who are endeavoring to enslave us.

"The foregoing Resolves being distinctly read paragraph by paragraph in an open town meeting convened in Athol, August 25, A. D. 1774, were unanimously accepted and ordered to be recorded.

"Pr. Wm. Bigelow, Town Clerk. Aaron Smith, Moderator."

Note 2. Page 9. The Committees on Correspondence for Worcester County assembled on August 9, 1774, and the county resolutions were adopted on August 10. The resolutions of the town were more definite and aggressive than those of the county, but the town held a special meeting on September 2, and accepted the report of the convention, and ordered these resolutions also to be placed on its records.

The Suffolk County resolutions were adopted on September 6, 1774. Berkshire County had held its convention before the date of the convention for Worcester County, on July 6, but its resolutions were of a milder type.

Note 1. Page 20. There seem to have been some families of the Baptist denomination among the early settlers, and from time to time individuals were relieved from taxation for the church upon certificates of their belief and affiliation with that denomination. Religious worship was maintained by them in connection with others of that church, in Royalston and in Templeton, and a year or two preceding the year 1830 a house of worship was erected in Athol by the Baptists.

Note 1. Page 22. The following is from the Town Records:—

"At a Town meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of Athol in the County of Worcester duly Qualifyed and regularly assembled according to Law held at the meeting house on the 18th day of May A. D. 1774: past the following Vots viz. . . . —

"Art 6 Voted that West Hill and all west of Tulley east branch be a Squadarn for a School. . . . and under Art 6 Voted that Chesnut Hill So Called and all east of the east branch of Tulley North of the River be a Squadarn for a School.... Under Art 6 Voted that Four Squadarns for Schools be made on the South Side of the river, and Voted to Choose a Committee to make the boundaries of the afore Sd Four Squadarns South of the River . . . and Chose John Oliver Ephraim Stockwill and Wilm Ward for Sd Committee Who are to make return to the Town at the next meeting of Their doings thereon.

. . . art 9. Voted that the pew Spots in the meeting house be established to the men that drawed them and to their Heirs forever. . . . "

Note 1. Page 27. Barber, in his Historical Collections, published in 1839, pp. 552–553, gives the following statistics regarding the town: —

"The village at this place consists of about fifty dwelling-houses, four mercantile stores, and a number of mechanic shops. . . . In this town are a cotton factory, paper-mill, a large scythe establishment, cupola furnace, door and sash factory, large cabinet works, turning mills, etc. There are six churches, — two Congregational, two Methodist, one Baptist, and one Universalist. Population, 1,603. In 1837, there was one cotton mill, 1,024 spindles; cotton goods manufactured, 316,100 yards; hands employed, ten males, forty-five females. Boots manufactured, 16,312 pairs; shoes, 38,333 pairs; value of boots and shoes, $58,741; males employed, seventy-nine; females, thirty-seven."

Note 1. Page 19. Rev. Mr. Clarke in his Centennial Discourse makes frequent references to the manuscript of James Humphreys, which he had at the time in his possession, and which he refers to as "'Memorandum of the First Settlers, . . . taken from the best authority that can be obtained from the oldest inhabitants' by James Humphrey, Esq., son of the first minister of the town." Mr. Clarke says that Mr. Humphreys states in the manuscript that he was personally and familiarly acquainted with some of the earlier settlers and derived his information from them.

This manuscript was long in the possession of the James Humphreys family, and great effort has now been made to find it. James Humphreys, the fifth of the name from the first minister, who now resides in Dedham, Massachusetts, has discovered among the family effects what appears to be a portion of this manuscript but the remainder has not been found.

The portion of the manuscript discovered runs as follows:

The Rev^{d} M^{r}. Humphreys, after a few Inhabitants had settled in Perquague, gave him an invitation to settle in the gospel Ministry — altho, few in number — yet their duty, to support the gospel, was the first great object, of the settlers — considering the preaching gospel to be one of the most important objects, especially for a new settled place.

Altho almost, every imbarisment presented it self to view, at the same time (viz) the few inhabitants surrounded by a barbarious Foe — beleaving that every posible exertions — to increase their Popalation for their arm of safety — gave Mr. Humphreys a call, and for

his support, gave fiftytwo pounds a year — which sum he accepted altho he knew the Annuity was insufficient

Yet the friendship amoung the people one towards another — was without a parallal — he was Ordaind the seventeenth of Novr 1750 —

the Inhiburrtance built them a small M. House — sufficient for the People, not far from Millers River — not yet assertaining whare the center of the Town would be — but by setting the Woods afire — it caught the M. House and was burnt down — which was a very heavy burden to the people — yet, still, being desirous to continue their religous priviledges — they immidiately commend building a New M. House on the street so called within about twenty rods from the fort — which was made comfortabe in a short time — for assemble in for the purpose intended —

but however prosperous — in their building troubles yet awaited them — for when a part was in the sanctiary — a number was oblige to watch at the post of her doors, with their arms by their side — to keep of their devouring Enamy — whilst others ware worshiping God within — for three successive years the Revd Mr- Humphreys carried his Gun into the meeting House — in case of an Alarm —

Yet all these dificulties did not dishearten them — and being in perfect friendship one with another — and their Minister — they continued, in cultivating the soil and making every improovment necessary for the rising Generation — the second M. House was too small for the Inhabitants — and was dispos[d] of — And the third, and last, is the one we now assemble in —

the Revd Mr. Humphreys was dismst from the people in Feby. 1782 after serving them in the Ministry for more than thirty one years —

.

A Young Man by the Name of Aron-Hager — from N Salem — while at worke for James Humphreys — was imployed in taking down an old building — the timber suddenly gave way, and fell upon his head — by which wound he died the fourth day —

the most shocking to relate — to close this narrative — of sudden death — was a Respectable midling aged Man — committed Suicide — his name is familier I presume — to all — who recollects the circumstance — Jona Crosby

PUBLICATIONS RELATIVE TO THE HISTORY OF ATHOL.

History of Worcester County, by Peter Whitney, 1793; Athol.

Historical Collections of Towns in Massachusetts, by John Warner Barber, 1848; Athol. Published by Warren Lazell, Worcester.

Centennial Discourse of Rev. Samuel F. Clarke, Sept. 9, 1850, before First Church and Society in Athol, with Appendix. Published by Crosby and Nichols, Boston.

The Home of the Ancient Dead Restored. Address of Rev. John F. Norton on July 4, 1859, at Reconsecration of the Ancient Cemetery, with report of Proceedings. Published by Rufus Putnam, Athol.

Athol in Suppressing the Great Rebellion. Record by a Committee of the Town, Rev. J. F. Norton, Chairman; 1866. Published by Rand and Avery, Boston.

History of Worcester County; Athol, by George W. Horr; 1879. Published by C. F. Jewett and Company, Boston.

Semi-Centennial Address of Rev. Henry A. Blake, before the Evangelical Congregational Church, 1880.

History of Worcester County; Athol, by Rev. John F. Norton, 1889. Published by J. W. Lewis & Co., Philadelphia.

Athol, Past and Present, by Lilley B. Caswell, 1899. Published by author, Athol.









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